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LADIES OF FASHION

AS the Japanese social season approaches the many foreign ladies in Tokyo, especially those connected with the various embassies and legations, must feel from year to year the awkwardness of how to understand and enter into the fashionable life of the capital. Japanese ladies had the same experience when foreign fashions began to be introduced into Japanese social functions during the period when the Europeanization of the nation was at its height. From 1887 to 1895 the imitation of Europe was promoted with great zest. How this was done sometimes proved ludicrous and far-fetched in the extreme. To celebrate the promulgation of the Imperial Constitution it was thought becoming to have a pig-race in which grandees amused themselves by chasing these animals, which, when caught, were killed, and dressed by the ladies for the ensuing feast. Even a famous marchioness appeared in the disguise of a peacock with spreading tail and all. The Dowager Princess Mori and the Marchioness Nabeshima and the Marchioness Hachisuka were the great ladies of that period. To-day the leaders of the social set at the capital are the Princess Ichijo, the Countess Terajima, the Countess Ogasawara and their friends; and the Marchioness Inouye, recently back from the Embassy in London, must also be ranked among the queens of Japanese society, not to mention the Viscountess Okabe and the Viscountess Kato.

One of the leaders of Japanese society in the charitable sphere is the Countess

Kamei, who does much to promote organizations for poor relief. The young Marchioness Saionji, who is a graduate of the Women's University, is expected to prove a valuable helpmate to her husband in his political aspirations to emulate his venerable father. There are many leaders of fashion among the ladies of old *daimyo* stock; but those of the *kugé* blood, the ladies of the old Court Nobles, are very retiring in their habits and do not show themselves much in fashionable or any other society.

It is a growing custom in Japanese society to have gatherings and reunions of those who were formerly students of the same school or college in their girlhood days. The alumnae of the Peeress' School are much given to this form of entertainment, usually in the spring and autumn, taking advantage of the flowers and leaves in season. The gatherings take place at one of their country villas and are carried out on a modest but ample scale, becoming to the decorum of the highclass Japanese lady.

Frequently now one sees theatre parties of Japanese ladies which indicates a new departure in society; and there are often parties who go to concerts or other musical entertainments. Most of the music on such occasions is on native instruments, the *koto* and the *samisen* for the most part, the latter being accompanied by music of a more refined order than that usually associated with the instrument. Most of the performers are young ladies of good family who have distinguished themselves in music. The guests



KAKEMONO PAINTING ON SILK, ABOUT 1768

By Shunshō Katsukawa

Collection of Mr. Ryūhei Murayama, Ōsaka

A fashionable woman of the wealthy merchant class; showing
the prevailing type of female beauty in Ōsaka

From The Kokka, Tokyo, Japan

seldom participate, which is a custom demanded by native notions of modesty.

The Japanese woman is seen at her best, however, in her own home; and home parties are the most enjoyable, where the cordial converse of high society is ideally possible. The Japanese wife prides herself on being queen of the home rather than on cutting any prominent figure in the social world or the world of fashion. The idea of a few years ago that modern society demanded the frequent holding of balls and dancing parties has about died out of Japanese society; these fads are always transient and will not return, let us hope. The notion that we must imitate foreigners to win their good will is proving a mistake; and as Japanese ladies are inclined to be conservative, the change is appreciated.

The Japanese lady of high class has a wide range of taste and endeavour; she reads the better class of magazine, and can turn a tune skillfully on the *koto* or piano. The Countess Ogasawara, for example, is an accomplished musician, and an expert in horticulture as well. Lately she has been trying her hand at sculpture and is displaying no meagre talent, much to the delight of her clever husband who is, himself, no mean artist.

Of course in some ways woman the world over is the same: she will talk about dress and discuss the hang of a *kimono* in Japan just the same as her confrère of occidental countries, even to the buttons and means of fastening on her garments. The ladies of the old highclass families like to keep up ancestral customs, which tends to keep them more at home than would otherwise be the case. The outside world,

however, is getting too much for some of them, and will insist on entering the sacred abodes of ancestral exclusion. Not long ago one of the most distinguished princesses of Tokyo even traveled in a street car with her usual attendant, a thing impossible a few years ago. And during the ride the princess heard some remarks about her from passengers who did not know she was in the same car, which happily, and very naturally too, were of a nature highly complimentary; for this princess is noted for her modesty and care for others. One of the passengers said to the other: "The Princess is a very magnanimous lady: very liberal indeed; and she is so humble withal, though the wife of the greatest of the *daimyo* families. She even eats hens' eggs, a thing one would suppose she would not know the shape of."

To see Japanese ladies of all classes mix up, one goes to the Mitsukoshi Department Store, the Wanamaker's of Japan; and there it will be seen that the wives of the newly rich are far more gorgeously arrayed than the wives of princes and nobles or any of the old highclass families of Japan. The mourning which Japan has been going through for the Emperor Meiji and the Empress Shoken has left a deep mark on Japanese highclass society, and the ladies of this set have not been going out much during the last three years, not even on great national occasions; while the war in Europe, which leaves many of the Tokyo Embassies in shadow, has also made Japanese high society less demonstrative out of sympathy.

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From The Japan Magazine, Tokyo.